A

SERMON

PREACH'D at

Little-Wild-Street

ON

TUESDAY, *April* 25, 1749.

BEING

The Day appointed by HIS MAJESTY, for a general THANKSGIVING to Almighty GOD, for the PEACE.

By *JOSEPH STENNETT.*

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MDCCXLIX.

SERMON

BRITISH MUSEUM

LONDON:

PSALM LXXXV. 8.

I will hear what God the LORD *will ſpeak: for he will ſpeak peace unto his people, and to his ſaints: but let them not turn again to folly.*

AS harmony and love enter deeply into the eſſential happineſs of the world of perfection, ſo the unpeaceful diſpoſitions and circumſtances of mankind here, are ſtrong and experimental evidences, of our defection from that condition in which we were at firſt created. Thus it is the wiſe and manifeſt deſign of revelation to diſcover to us, on the one hand, the fatal ſprings of this our miſery, and on the other, to inſtruct us into the true, and only way of reconciliation with the Divine Being, of obtaining rational and ſolid tranquility in our own minds, and peace with one another. And, ſince the happy occaſion of this day, in which we celebrate, not only our own deliverance, but that of the greateſt part of *Europe*, from the deſolating rage of a bloody and expenſive war, muſt needs awaken a civil joy in every man's breaſt, who has a tenderneſs for human nature, and a love for his country; ſo, as the interpoſition of heaven will be allow'd, by all wiſe

and good men, to have the chief influence in ſuch an important event, religion ſhould certainly have the principal ſhare in our joy. And theſe were the ſentiments of the inſpired writer, in the words which I have choſen, for the ſubject of my Diſcourſe.

It is very uncertain who was the penman of this pſalm, or what was the exact time when it was publiſhed. Some have aſcribed it to *David*, and imagine it was writen on the occaſion of his return from that diſtreſſing exile, to which he was ſubjected by the moſt unnatural treaſon of his ſon *Abſalom*. But the greater number of commentators, with I think much more reaſon, judge, that it was compoſed after the return of the *Jews* from the *Babyloniſh* captivity, and eſpecially deſigned for the public celebration of that great deliverance.

And thus the pſalmiſt begins with the national acknowledgments, and gives God all the glory of this happy event. Lord, *thou haſt been favourable unto thy land: thou haſt brought back the captivity of* Jacob [a]. As if he had ſaid, "Tho' this ſinful people have moſt juſtly forfeited any title to thy favour and compaſſion, yet, in the midſt of judgment, thou haſt *remembred mercy*. Thou haſt given a freſh, and moſt extraordinary evidence of thy paternal regard to that land, to which thou haſt long laid a ſpecial claim: thou haſt not forgotten thy covenant of old, but haſt

[a] Ver. 1.

" haſt fulfilled thy promiſe to our fathers. " *Thou haſt forgiven the iniquity of thy people,* " *thou haſt covered all their ſin* [b]. Tho' thy " wrath was the righteous conſequence of our " great and national tranſgreſſions, and it has " moſt properly been diſplayed in the diſgrace " we have fallen under among our enemies; " yet thou haſt heard the ſupplications of our " adverſity; *thou haſt taken away all thy wrath,* " *and turned thyſelf from the fierceneſs of thine* " *anger*" [c].

THESE acknowledgments are followed with a warm application to Heaven, for the effectual confirmation of the favours beſtowed upon *Iſrael*, and all ſuitable aſſiſtance to enable them to improve them to the happieſt purpoſes. " *Turn us* " *O* GOD *of our ſalvation*, —and *revive us a-* " *gain, that thy people may rejoice in thee.* " *Shew us thy mercy, O* LORD, *and grant us* " *thy ſalvation* [d]. As thou haſt brought back " our perſons and families from this ſad capti- " vity, ſo turn our hearts to thyſelf, which " have been long alienated from thee. Com- " pleat the kind work which thou haſt begun: " reſtore us to our former happy circumſtan- " ces: let the peace we enjoy be ſolid and " laſting: and, with the revival of our tem- " poral proſperity, let true religion revive a- " mong us; and then our joy will appear to " be moſt rational and proper, and it will con- " tinue."

[b] Ver. 2. [c] Ver. 3. [d] Ver. 4.——7.

THESE things are ſucceeded by the paſſage I firſt read you, which, with what follows, gives us a lively view of the ſentiments with which the pſalmiſt, and other good men of his time, received the happy tidings of the reeſtabliſhment of the public tranquility, their confidence in the ſucceſs of their further requeſts, and the great importance of the faithful improvement of ſuch bleſſings. *I will hear what God the* LORD *will ſpeak: for he will ſpeak peace uuto his people, and to his ſaints: but let them not turn again to folly.* Wherein,

FIRST, we have to conſider the good news which the prophet receives, and which he thus ſolemnly records, and publiſhes.

AND this is PEACE: a term which conveys the idea of moſt ſubſtantial and extenſive happineſs, as it ſtands oppoſed to almoſt every miſery that has been introduced among us by the fall. For if there be any evil in a conteſt with infinite wiſdom and power, with infinite holineſs and goodneſs, any in ſtrife and confuſion among men, any miſchief in oppreſſion, in rapine and cruelty on the one hand, and in poverty and ſlavery and violent death on the other; if there be any thing diſtreſſing in a breaſt heated with malice and revenge, and tormented with a reproaching conſcience; then, I ſay, a term that expreſſes the reverſe of all theſe, muſt needs carry in it, a very comprehenſive repreſentation of happineſs. And ſo it will be conſidered, whether we underſtand the words as referring to the nation of the *Jews* in general,

general, or to particular perſons; and this, either as it may have regard to their religious, or their civil circumſtances, the return of the Divine favour, the ſpiritual compoſure of their minds, and the peace and proſperity of the church; or the ſuppreſſion of civil diſcords, and the reſtoration of public tranquility, after the calamities of a long and bloody conteſt with foreign powers: tho', I think indeed, the latter is chiefly intended. *Peace* it is the pſalmiſt proclaims, and it muſt be welcome to a nation, which, however victorious in former times, had of late met with very different ſucceſs.

And what rendered theſe tidings ſtill more agreeable was, that this peace was appointed for the *people of God.* It was a favour promiſed to *Abraham* their father, and one of the *ſure mercies* of *David*; that which was to become a bleſſing *indeed* to the *people* of God, and to *his ſaints.* This laſt character ſeems to be added by way of reſtriction, and deſigned to intimate, that true religion only intitles us to true peace, and prepares us to enjoy it aright; and tho' it be one of the greateſt bleſſings that Heaven itſelf can beſtow, it will be compleatly ſo, to none but thoſe, who are ſanctified by God's Spirit, and conformed to his image. But,

Secondly, We have an account, in the words, of the ſacred attention with which the pſalmiſt receives this news, and with which he recom-

recommends it to the notice of others. *I will hear what God the* LORD *will ſpeak*, &c.

As if he had ſaid, " *Peace* is the bliſsful " ſound, it is the voice of God; and when " the great Creator and Governour of the " world ſpeaks, ſure all the earth ſhould hear: " It is the voice of wiſdom and of power, of " juſtice and of goodneſs; and with what at- " tention ſhould it be received? I have many " a time heard the language of heaven in a " way of wrath and judgment, and I have " been taught my duty, to liſten to it with " fear and trembling; and ſhall not then the " gentle voice of *peace* —— *peace* and proſ- " perity to the church, and to my country, " command my moſt affectionate and thank- " ful regard? Tho' infernal ſpirits may rage, " and wicked men may murmur; tho' many " of thoſe who partake of its advantages may " receive the news with a ſinful indifference, " or treat the bleſſing itſelf with ungrateful " repinings, yet the Angels above rejoice, " and ſing *glory to God on high*, when he ſends " *peace on earth*; and ſurely ſaints below will " join the ſong. I will adore the providence " by which the happy work is accompliſhed; " I will receive it as the anſwer of prayer, " and return the fruitful praiſe that ſuch good- " neſs does require; I will honour every " inſtrument employed to promote it, and " bleſs the feet of the meſſengers that bring " the tidings. Nor ſhall my gratitude ſtop " here; but as I receive the news with joy,

" ſo

" ſo I will publiſh it with triumph; and by " my own thankful example, endeavour to " awaken, and aſſiſt the gratitude of my " country, and the church of God." And then,

THIRDLY, we have the wiſe and religious caution the inſpired author gives to all thoſe who partake of the bleſſing. *But let them not turn again to folly.* Some ancient verſions [e] render the words in a very different manner; but I think our own tranſlation comes neareſt to the original.

SIN is in its own nature the greateſt deviation from true wiſdom, and therefore *folly*, in the phraſe of the ſcriptures, generally carries this idea with it: thus the *way* of ſinners *is* called *their folly* [f]: and as the wiſe man *ſought to know the wickedneſs of it* [g], ſo the pſalmiſt, humbling himſelf under his iniquities, ſays, *O God, thou knoweſt my fooliſhneſs, and my ſins are not hid from thee* [h].

AND thus the paſſage under our conſideration is to be underſtood as a prudent and religious caution to ſocieties, as well as to particular perſons, but eſpecially to good men, to *rejoice* on theſe occaſions, *with trembling*, to improve by the dear-bought experience of their paſt contentions, to avoid that wanton and ſecure

[e] — καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς ἐπιστρέφοντας πρὸς αὐτὸν καρδίαν. LXXII.
— et de tendentibus ad eum ex totis cordibus ſuis. Arab.
— et in eos qui convertuntur ad cor. Vulg. Lat.
[f] Pſal. xlix. 3. [g] Eccleſ. vii. 25. [h] Pſal. lxix. 5.

cure behaviour, into which they have been apt to fall, in times of outward peace and proſperity; and the indulgence of thoſe looſe principles, and thoſe vain and ſenſual practices, which have brought on them theſe judgments in times paſt; leſt they return with redoubled vengeance in time to come. And whoever reflects on the general conduct of the *Jewiſh* nation, will ſoon ſee, with what juſtice and propriety, ſuch a warning as this was ſet before them, upon ſo remarkable an occaſion.

HAVING given you this ſhort account of the words of the text, and ſhewn you from the example, as well as counſel, of the inſpired author, with what religious joy and gratitude, all the bleſſings of peace ſhould be entertained, and with what wiſe and holy caution they ſhould be improved, I ſhall further conſider them only as they refer to the reſtoration of national tranquility; and, in that view, I ſhall,

I. SHEW you the reaſonableneſs of this advice. And then,

II. WITH what propriety we may apply the whole to the happy occaſion of this day. And,

I. THE great reaſonableneſs of the conduct recommended in the text will appear, if we conſider,

1. THAT ſuch a bleſſing as this has the moſt evident marks of the interpoſition of Heaven upon it. 'Tis the work, as well as the voice

voice of God: he *ſpeaks peace*, and he *makes it* [i].

THIS is ſo manifeſt, that it has been acknowledged in all ages, and by all nations; even by the heathens themſelves, tho' the honours of it have been impiouſly transferred to their falſe deities: and indeed one would think, men muſt be almoſt void of all rational obſervation or reflection, and very near the ſtupidity of atheiſm itſelf, who can deny it. For who that views the vaſt and innumerable globes which form the ſeveral ſyſtems in the heavens, and conſiders the amazing rapidity of their motions, the conſtant and exact order and harmony they maintain, without any juſtling or concuſſion; or who that obſerves the regular diſpoſition of the various parts, and furniture, of that on which we reſide, and the wonderful manner in which it has been continued thro' the revolutions of ſo many ages, notwithſtanding all the diſorder ſin has introduced into it, but muſt acknowledge the moſt evident ſignatures of the immediate hand of infinite wiſdom and omnipotency? And tho' the hiſtory of paſt generations, and the ſituation of things in our own times, abundantly diſcover the ſad effects of the influence which the great author of diſcord and confuſion has obtained in the world, and the ſubjection men are under to their own diſorderly paſſions and inclinations; yet, this is ſo far from being a juſt objection to the regular

[i] Pſal. cxlvii. 14.

government of providence, that it is the moſt noble proof of it. Order is thus brought out of confuſion; and nothing can be more evident, than that it is alone owing to the over-ruling management of the hand of God, that the whole world has not been deſtroyed long ago.

And then, if it be neceſſary to the whole, that care ſhould be taken of every part, and it is abundantly aſſerted in the holy ſcriptures, that the meaneſt of God's works are under his watchful eye, it muſt ſurely be the moſt unreaſonable thing in the world to conclude, that the hoſtile diſputes of the greateſt potentates of the earth, in which every thing is involved that is important to many millions of their ſubjects, ſhould be neglected by his providence. For, tho' it is impoſſible, that theſe outragious conteſts could take their origin from the diſpoſition and temper of that Being, who delights in goodneſs, and who enjoys a perfect tranquility in himſelf; yet, it is with great juſtice and propriety, that he makes uſe of the vicious paſſions of men for their mutual correction; and that he often employs the ſword of one powerful nation, as *the rod of his wrath*, to puniſh another for their iniquities. And it muſt certainly be allowed, that there is hardly any meaſure of the Divine conduct, which more magnificently diſplays the power and goodneſs of God's nature, than thoſe interpoſitions, by which he checks, and over-rules the impetuoſity of national quarrels, and ſtays the

the madneſs of the people, as he does the *raging of the ſeas* [k].

THUS then, there can be no room to doubt, that this is the ſpecial work of God amongſt men, when we conſider, that it is eſſential to his nature; that it is viſible in the moſt glorious operations of his hands, and in the conſtant conduct of his providence; when the ſcriptures aſſure us, that it cannot reſide in the human heart, till he that formed *the lips* will *ſpeak* it [l], and that it is his prerogative to *make peace in his high places* [m], to *bleſs his people with it* [n], and to *give it to* Jeruſalem [o]; and much more, when to all this we add, that he ſent his own dear Son into this ruined world, under the character of the *Prince of peace*, to proclaim it to ſinful men, and to procure it by the merit of his own blood; that it is the conſtant work of his Spirit in their hearts; that it is the language of his goſpel; and in one word, that the ultimate happineſs to which they are invited, is the full enjoyment of it, in that world where it reigns for ever.

IF therefore it brings theſe evidences of the divine influence along with it, ſurely every wiſe man will be convinced of the reaſonableneſs of receiving the notices of it with a gratitude, in ſome meaſure, proportioned to the dignity of the Divine character, and the importance of a diſpenſation, in which God ſo remarkably diſ-

[k] Pſal. lxxxix. 9. [l] Iſa. lvii. 19. [m] Job xxv. 2.
[n] Pſal. xxix. 11. [o] Pſal. cxxv. 5.

plays his attributes; and be very cautious how he any way promotes a revival of thoſe confuſions in the world, which are ſo contrary to the gracious diſpoſition of its Founder, and carry in them ſuch apparent marks of his diſpleaſure. But,

2. THE reaſonableneſs of this conduct will farther appear, if we conſider, that public peace brings along with it a great plenty and variety of other bleſſings.

THIS is a conſideration too plain in itſelf to need any enlargement, or to admit of any objection. War, we all know, is big with every kind of calamity. The kingdoms that have been overthrown, in every age, and every country, the devaſtations which have been ſpread far and wide, and the ocean of human blood that has been ſhed, are undeniable evidences of it. And therefore, if the preſervation and increaſe of mankind, the improvement of arts and ſciences, of husbandry and commerce, and, in a word, of every thing that has a tendency to promote the riches and ſtrength of a nation, may be accounted bleſſings, theſe we are all ſenſible are the genuine fruits of public tranquility. To which we may add, that when it is not abuſed, it has a happy tendency to meliorate the minds of men; to lead them into diſpoſitions moſt beneficial to human nature in general, and to their own country in particular; and, what is of the higheſt importance, to enable them to cultivate and ſpread

true

true religion, with all its infinite advantages in the world. But,

3. As theſe bleſſings are the natural product of public peace, ſo, it is the right improvement of them, that can only make them truly ſo, and ſecure their continuance.

WITHOUT the maintenance of virtue, without the exerciſe of juſtice and truth, of induſtry and œconomy, indeed without the fear of God, and a general attention to religion, no nation, tho' in the enjoyment of every other advantage, can poſſibly be happy. And if, after the calamities of war, the return of their ſafety, wealth, and eaſe, is abuſed to ſerve the purpoſes of luxury and vice; their ſtrength muſt needs be enervated; the wiſdom of their councils may reaſonably be expected to decline, as their contempt of religion increaſes; and it is no wonder then, if the ſword has a more terrible commiſſion againſt them, and they become an eaſy prey to any deſigning neighbour. *O that thou hadſt hearkened*, ſaith the Lord, *to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteouſneſs as the waves of the ſea* [p]. Therefore, when this mercy is honourably obtained, and the great Ruler of the world ſilences the rage of war, and ſays to the devouring ſword, *It is enough*; one would think, every one that has any due ſenſe of his own advantage, that is a friend to mankind, or to his country, ſhould find himſelf too much inter-

[p] Iſa. xlviii. 18.

intereſted in the bleſſing, to want much reaſoning to perſuade him, not only to receive it with joy, and to wiſh well to its continuance; but to watch againſt all the *folly*, that may have any tendency to defeat the happy ends of it. For tho' treaties be ever ſo wiſely framed, or firmly ratified, tho' barriers be ever ſo ſtrong, or alliances ever ſo powerful, ſin, if it be indulged, will break down all; and there can be no eſtabliſhed ſafety, without an intereſt in the friendſhip of Heaven. And this leads me,

II. To ſhew you, with what propriety, we may apply what has been ſaid to the happy occaſion of this day, —— *a day appointed, by his Majeſty's authority, for a national thankſgiving to Almighty God, for putting an end to the late bloody and expenſive war, by the concluſion of a juſt and honourable peace.*

The occaſion every one muſt allow, is very important; and if we may judge of it, by the treatment it has met with from the determined enemies of our conſtitution, it is a very happy one. For, the ſame ſet of men who juſtified and applauded the ſcandalous treaty of *Utrecht*, have condemned this; and, I ſuppoſe, it will be difficult, if not impoſſible, to find a man among us, that is a friend to popery and the pretender, who is not an enemy to this peace. Theſe men, aſſiſted by many of thoſe, who imagine their merits, and their capacities for the ſervice of the ſtate, are not duly regard-

ed,

ed, have laboured, by every kind of art, to ſet the public meaſures, on this occaſion, in ſuch an invidious light, as might tend to alienate the affections of the people from the beſt of Princes, and ſink the characters of thoſe eminent and worthy men, who have ſo wiſely, and ſucceſsfully imployed their great abilities, for the reſtoration of this invaluable bleſſing to their country.

IT is too notorious in what a manner this malevolent ſpirit has, for a long time, prevailed among us; and it may poſſibly yet farther prevail, without feeling the puniſhment it deſerves here. But theſe men would do well to conſider, what they have to fear, as the juſt and reaſonable conſequence of the impiety and ingratitude they have ſhewn to that infinitely good, but jealous Being, who has ſo remarkably directed this important affair.

THE ſecrecy that always will, and always ought to attend the ſprings of action, in every wiſe and good adminiſtration of government, muſt needs render us, in a thouſand caſes, however for a time, very incompetent judges of their propriety. But with regard to a fact of this public nature, methinks, it is not difficult to determine, whether it deſerves the characters of *juſt* and *honourable*. And ſince it has met with ſuch abuſe, and that the glory of God, the intereſt of religion, and our common welfare are very greatly concerned in it, I hope it will not be thought unbecoming this ſolemnity, and the place in which I ſtand, briefly to

attempt

tempt its vindication; and to endeavour to ſhew you, how our hearts ought to be diſpoſed, and how our conduct ſhould be regulated, on this great occaſion; eſpecially, as I ſhall confine myſelf to the rules laid down in my text. And,

I. THEN, according to the example of the pſalmiſt, and his advice to the people of *Iſrael*, I think there can be no doubt, but that we, alſo, ſhould *hear what God the* LORD *ſpeaks*, in the preſent caſe; and that we ſhould conſider, and own his merciful hand in it.

I HAVE already obſerved what undeniable evidence we have of the ſpecial influence of Heaven, in affairs of this national importance; and have ſhewn you, that as *wars* are the natural product of the *luſts* of *men*[q], ſo the dreadful calamities, which commonly attend them, are ſome of the moſt public, and remarkable tokens of the Divine diſpleaſure.

'TIS true, indeed, that the defence of our liberties and properties, and thoſe of our neighbours, will, on the principles of religion, juſtify the exertion of our public ſtrength, and the repelling force by force; and thoſe brave men, who hazard their lives in ſuch a cauſe, deſerve great honour from their country. But they, who *delight in war*, are very frequently, and very juſtly, condemned in the holy ſcriptures, as ſons of *violence*[r]; and ought to be eſteemed the enemies of mankind. And whoever impartially

[q] James iv. 1. [r] Pſal. xi. 5. and lxviii. 30.

partially conſiders the hiſtories of former as well as well as latter times, will ſee, that many of thoſe who ſtand foremoſt in the liſt of heroes, have been no other than imperial robbers, and have raiſed their fame, and their other acquiſitions, on no better a foundation than that of rapine and murder. Men may poſſibly read the accounts of battles and ſieges, and the various ſucceſs of hoſtile diſputes, without much emotion; and, in the heat of blood, they may engage in them too without the exerciſe of thoſe tender ſentiments, which natural compaſſion calls for. But were they, in a calm temper of mind, to ſurvey the ruins of great and opulent cities, juſt after they have been plundered and demoliſhed, to traverſe populous and fruitful countries, which have been lately laid waſte by ſword and fire, and to viſit the fields of carnage, the next day after the ſlaughter, they would ſurely ſee, and feel too, that public peace is ſuch a bleſſing to mankind, as cannot be rejected, when it is to be had on reaſonable terms, without great offence to the Divine Being, and without contradicting the ſalutary ends of government, and the good of ſociety.

PROVIDENCE has fixed our lot in a good land, furniſhed us with moſt invaluable privileges, and bleſſed our people with an hereditary jealouſy of their liberties, and a natural bravery for their defence; and I am ſure, nothing that I have ſaid, is intended to diſcourage either. But as, I am perſuaded, the late

war was entered upon, not for the meer purſuit of glory, or to make conqueſts upon the dominions of our neighbours, but for the juſt and neceſſary defence of our rights and poſſeſſions, and to prevent one power from overwhelming the reſt, and ſo deſtroying that balance, which is of abſolute importance to the liberties of all *Europe*; ſo, when a treaty could be obtained by which theſe great ends were anſwered, ſurely reaſon and religion both dictate the juſtice and propriety of entering into it. And if we take but a curſory review of the ſtate of public affairs, at the time when this tranſaction took place, we ſhall ſoon ſee that the hand of God was moſt remarkably concerned in carrying it into execution.

In order to this, let us only look back a little, and remember that the rapidity of the ſucceſs of our enemies in *Flanders* had brought them almoſt into the heart of *Holland*; that, encouraged by the amazing inactivity of that ſtate, they were very nigh becoming maſters of it; and that they had no very diſtant view of improving ſuch a conqueſt to the ruin of *our* country, and the ſubjection of all *Europe* to their power. I ſay, let us remember theſe things, and never forget, that in the heat of this victorious purſuit, Providence was pleaſed to bleſs our fleet with ſuch ſucceſſes, as not only gave a check to their triumphs, but almoſt ruined their trade; and by the frequent captures of *Spaniſh* money, which were attended with an uncommon ſcarcity of proviſions

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in their own country, ſuch a ſtop was put to thoſe reſources which were neceſſary to the carrying on the war, as, together with the ſeaſonable approach of our ſuccours from the north, brought things to this remarkable criſis. And thus theſe great confederate powers were, to the aſtoniſhment of the whole world, reduced on both ſides to ſuch a bay, that, in the midſt of as great a heat of national reſentment as perhaps was ever ſeen, they were each obliged to ſheath their ſwords, and a definitive and honourable treaty was concluded, and ratified; and this, conſidering its extent, and the jarring intereſts of ſo many powers concerned in it, I think in leſs time than has hardly ever been known before. And how is it poſſible then to conſider theſe things without owning the hand of God, and ſaying with the prophet, *This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes*[s]?

But farther, whatever thoſe men ſay, who caſt contempt on all the bleſſings they enjoy, in order to abuſe the inſtruments that convey them, it may be affirmed with great truth, that this treaty has produced ſuch a ſettlement of our conteſts with foreign powers, as we could not have in prudence refuſed, as our national circumſtances ſtood; or indeed, on religious principles, had they been much better. And future hiſtory will do juſtice to his Majeſty's meaſures, and to thoſe great men em-

[s] Pſal. cxviii 23.

ployed by him on this occaſion, who, ſurrounded by a moſt wicked and clamorous oppoſition, had firmneſs enough to enter ſteadily into this treaty, and to purſue in it thoſe great and good ends, which were the original intentions of the war, and which could only juſtify it. Nor can it be denied, that theſe ends, by the bleſſing of God, and their unwearied endeavours are obtained. The balance of power in the *Empire* is ſecured; *Flanders* is reſtored; *Holland* is reſcued, and preſerved, and its great dangers have providentially led it to fly to its moſt natural ſecurity, under the protection of the hereditary deſcendant of a race of princes, who have been the guardians of the liberties of that common-wealth from its foundation. As to ourſelves, the right of the beſt of Kings, and the ſucceſſion of it in his royal proteſtant line, on which every thing that is dear to us and our poſterity depends, is again recognized by all the contracting powers; and his throne more effectually ſecured than ever, by the happy ſuppreſſion of a moſt unnatural and dangerous rebellion; and by the proviſion of ſuch a law, as is well calculated to deſtroy that juriſdiction of little tyrants in the remoteſt part of this iſland, which has inſlaved ſuch multitudes of poor people, and for many ages rendered them the fit inſtruments to carry on the moſt deſperate deſigns of their leaders, in order to deſtroy our conſtitution. Thus ſhould we ſee, and own the hand of God, on this occaſion. And then,

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2. We ſhould ſurely receive ſuch a bleſſing with gratitude, and with a gratitude in ſome good meaſure proportion'd to it.

The light of nature teaches this, divine revelation requires it, and it is confirm'd by the greateſt and beſt examples in all ages. And if theſe arguments ſhould fail, one would think, ſuch as might be drawn from our own intereſt, and the danger which a contrary conduct will naturally expoſe us to, ſhould engage our thankfulneſs to God, who has ſo graciouſly interpos'd in our behalf, notwithſtanding our unhumbled temper, and the wretched indulgence of every kind of iniquity among us. We ſhould gratefully acknowledge the tenderneſs of a Prince, who, for the publick good, has ſubdued his own martial Spirit, and that in the midſt of the affronts his honour has receiv'd from foreign powers, and from the folly and petulancy of many of his own people; a Prince who has endeavour'd to ſecure the happineſs and tranquility of his ſubjects, even againſt their own inclinations. We ſhould bleſs every aſſiſting hand, that has been concern'd in this good work. And in order to reap the important effects of it, there are two things which are, in a ſpecial manner, recommended in my text;

First, That we endeavour, in our ſeveral ſtations, to ſecure and maintain our title to the characters recorded in the words, and make it appear by all our conduct, that we are *the people of God*, and *his ſaints*. If this were but generally purſued, we ſhould be the happieſt nation

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in the whole world, we ſhould have every good thing to hope for, and nothing to fear. By a repeated forfeiture of theſe characters, the *Jewiſh* nation loſt all their privileges, and are reduced to that univerſal deſolation, in which we behold them. And if we go on to follow their example, if a contempt of religion, of our relation to God, and our dependance upon him, continues to increaſe among us, as it has done for many years paſt, nothing leſs than a national ruin like theirs can be reaſonably expected.

I BELIEVE, I ſpeak to thoſe, who are in a good meaſure ſenſible of theſe things, and that you are perſuaded, that, whatever meaſures others take, you can do nothing ſo ſerviceable to your country, and your own perſonal advantage, as to recommend by your happy examples the religious character you ſuſtain, and to behave as becomes the people of God, as thoſe who are waſh'd in the blood of Jeſus, and ſanctified by his Spirit. Tho' the number of ſuch be but few in any nation, yet on their conduct much of the public welfare depends. And give me leave to add, that as we profeſs to diſtinguiſh ourſelves in this manner from others, nothing can carry in it a juſter reproach upon us, or indeed be ſo great a provocation to Heaven, as to renounce thoſe ſacred principles which we have received from God's word, which have been tranſmitted to us by our forefathers, and have been ſeal'd with their blood; or to indulge that practical ungodlineſs which prevails almoſt every where, which we have often

often condemned, and mourn'd over, and which is ſo utterly inconſiſtent with true religion. But,

SECONDLY, In order to ſecure the bleſſings we enjoy, the advice in the text furniſhes us with a moſt neceſſary caution, and that is, that we *return not again to* thoſe *follies*, which have expoſed us in times paſt to the divine diſpleaſure, and brought our late national diſtreſſes upon us.

THIS advice is indeed in ſome meaſure included under the laſt head; but yet, as it ſeems to refer to ſome peculiar *follies* of the people to whom the prophet more immediately directed it, and whoſe example, I fear, our nation has too apparently copied after, it will be fit, that I ſhould be a little more particular. And tho' it is very unpleaſant, on a day devoted to joy and thankfulneſs, to dwell on thoſe things which are ſo much our public diſgrace, and ſhould be the matter of our deep humiliation; yet, as it is a proper ſeaſon for caution, and as I am abundantly juſtified in it by the example in my text, I ſhall attempt to point out a few of thoſe many national *follies*, with which we have provoked God, and which, if we continue to repeat, will, I fear, be attended with the utmoſt danger to our country. And,

1. THEN, It will be acknowledged, that ever ſince the happy reformation, and the eſtabliſhment of liberty and the goſpel among us thro' a ſeries of providential wonders, there have continued many among us, who have diſcover'd

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ſtrong inclinations to return back again to popery, that religious, that worſt kind of *folly*, together with the civil tyranny which is naturally connected with it.

THE attempts us'd in times paſt to put this fooliſh and wicked ſcheme in execution, have been often attended with the utmoſt hazard, and we this day commemorate a freſh and great ſalvation from it: and therefore any future countenance to ſuch a deſign, muſt needs be the moſt egregious *folly* of which we can be guilty. A behaviour of this kind among the *Jews* ſeems to have been literally intended in the words; and it was the too common inclination of that people to introduce the idolatry of their heathen neighbours into their worſhip, and to change the free and happy government, which the wiſdom and goodneſs of God had eſtabliſh'd among them, for the tyrannical forms which prevail'd in thoſe nations. This fooliſh and obſtinate conduct expos'd them to a thouſand miſeries, and at laſt provoked God to give them up to deſtruction. Now one would think, that with ſuch a warning as this, moſt legibly and dreadfully recorded in our Bibles; and while we are in view of all the ſad effects of a tyranny, not unlike it, on the minds as well as bodies of great nations round about us; and after the affecting accounts of ſuch a religion, and ſuch a government, as are left us on record by our forefathers, it ſhould be hard to find a man, left among us, that ſhould be willing to try the exchange.

If we will but conſult our underſtandings, and the holy ſcriptures, ſurely we muſt ſoon ſee, that there never was a greater oppoſition between heathen idolatry, and the worſhip of the true God, under the old teſtament diſpenſation, than there is between the Chriſtian religion, and that of *Rome*, under the new. I will only ſtop to ſay, that the former evidently conſiſts in a faith grounded on reaſon and revelation, in piety towards God, in the holineſs of our hearts and lives, and all the acts of juſtice and charity towards each other: whereas the latter obliges us, to renounce our bibles and our underſtandings, in order to become believers; to ſhew our piety to God by worſhipping ten thouſand idols; and, which is the moſt ſhocking of all that ever was invented, that of the prieſt's own making, in order to receive the greater honour to himſelf. And then for ſanctification, they ſay, they can convey it by abſolution and holy water; and juſtice, mercy, and love to mankind are, it ſeems, moſt eminently diſplayed, by cutting their throats, in order to ſave their ſouls, or however to propagate this execrable religion. Delivered from theſe abominations, as we have been, ſhall ſuch a *folly* as this ever prevail among us again? Or, ſaved ſo often from the heavy yoke of a race of tyrants, whoſe government was one continued deſign againſt our conſtitution, and whoſe *tender mercies* were *cruel*; ſhall the ſpurious pretenders to a ſucceſſion from them, ever flatter us into ſuch a ſtupidity, as to make a

ſurrender of our religion, our liberties, and our poſterity into their hands, for no other reaſon, but a pretenſion to that ſucceſſion; and that too, after God has ſet a family over us, which by a juſt and gentle diſtribution of government, has preſerv'd all the great advantages of it among us, without one, ſingle, deſign'd attempt to hurt us, in any of our liberties, either civil, or religious? If ever ſuch a *folly* as this ſhould take effect; if it ſhould take effect, after that freſh, and extraordinary appearance of Divine Providence, in the ſuppreſſion of the daring attempt upon all that is dear to us, in that horrid rebellion which attended the late war; then muſt this people, hitherto great and happy, become the ſcorn of the whole world; and it will be moſt righteous, that they ſhould be expos'd to all the miſeries that even popery itſelf, and arbitrary power can bring upon them. But,

2. ANOTHER *folly*, to which we are in great danger of returning, is a contempt of all religion, and that ſenſual, and immoral behaviour, which conſtantly attends it.

MANKIND are exceeding prone to go into extremes; and this diſpoſition appears no where, perhaps, more evidently than among ourſelves: from whence it is very much to be fear'd, that, without an alteration in our general conduct, thoſe miſchiefs will inevitably be brought upon us, by a contemptuous treatment of all religion, which we have had ſuch juſt reaſon to expect, from the eſtabliſhment of a falſe one.

And

And it is eaſy to conclude, that when men are generally at liberty to gratify their luſts, without any religious reſtraint, an inundation of every kind of evil muſt follow in ſociety; and then, it cannot be long before the righteouſneſs of God's character, and a public vindication of his providence, muſt needs bring the heavieſt judgments upon them.

THERE are many, I hope, yet left among us, who ſee, and bewail theſe things. May the honour of God, the peculiar obligations we are under for a rich variety of temporal bleſſings, and above all for thoſe of divine grace, may the love of our country, and our concern for the riſing generation, fill our eyes with tears, and give the livelieſt accents to our petitions, that God would awaken the minds of all ranks of men amongſt us; leſt the amazing increaſe of the faſhionable, and expenſive vices of the times ſhould deſtroy our induſtry, waſte our ſubſtance, enervate our youth, and ſo expoſe our liberties and our country to become an eaſy prey to the invaſion of our enemies; or, which is ſtill more terrible, provoke the Divine Being to give us judicially up into their hands.

UNDER the diſappointments and diſtreſſes of the late war, and eſpecially, when that *banditti* of northern rebels came pouring in upon us, we ſaw our danger, we pray'd, and vow'd. We have reaſon to believe God heard our prayers: and have we not the ſame reaſon to conclude, that our vows were recorded? If there-

fore we boldly violate theſe ſacred engagements; if we continue to *return* to our former *follies*, after ſo many ſalvations, and after *ſuch a deliverance as this*, what can we expect; but that the Lord ſhould ſay to us, as he did to *Iſrael* of old, *I will deliver you no more*[t]; and *you ſhall reap the fruit of your doings*[u]? But,

3. ANOTHER *folly* to which we have been ſubject in times paſt, and which we have been lately taught, to our great coſt, to watch againſt, is the *making fleſh our arm*, and indulging a vain confidence in our own ſtrength.

THIS is a pride of nature, which inſolently robs God of his honour, and muſt needs expoſe men to the greateſt danger. I will not ſay, whence it ariſes, but it is a *folly* for which we are very remarkable: and we need reflect no farther back, than the beginning of this war, for a remembrance of that confident ſpirit, which appear'd in moſt converſations, and gave much offence to ſerious minds, and great encouragement to that faſhionable cry, which reproach'd our wiſe and cautious governors, for not ruſhing into a war, at any rate. A war we have had; and if it has done us no other good, I hope it has convinc'd us, that we are not invincible: I hope, it has humbled our pride; and, if we muſt indulge the vanity, that we are a match for the whole world, I hope we ſhall remember, that without God be on our ſide, we may be oblig'd to quit the field to a very ſmall part of it. Once more,

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[t] Judges x. 13. [u] Jer. xxi. 14.

4. ANOTHER *folly* which has prevail'd very much among us of late years, is a ſpirit of murmuring againſt authority; and that in a fuller enjoyment of all the bleſſings of a good government, than any nation in the world beſides can boaſt of.

THE dangers to which we have been expoſed by this flagrant abuſe of liberty, are too evident to be denied. And, notwithſtanding thoſe, who are employed in the direction of publick affairs, may receive great advantage from proper notice of errors, to which all human nature is ſubject: yet, the honour, and the importance of government, and prudence, as well as decency, will point out the rank of thoſe who ſhou'd make theſe animadverſions, and the fit ſeaſons, and places for doing it: and a good adminiſtration will always make the beſt uſe of them. But that ſcandalous licentiouſneſs both of converſation and the preſs, which has been for ſome years paſt indulged among us, has, I believe, exceeded every thing of the kind, that has been found in any age or nation under the ſun, beſides. No name, either of the living or the dead, has been too ſacred for this wicked liberty: no meaſure, tho' ever ſo wiſe, or ſalutary, but what the inventions of men have been rack'd to expoſe to the public reſentment, as the product of weak councils, or of wicked ones. Men have thought themſelves at liberty to collect, and ſpread every kind of idle ſcandal, and to diſpenſe with truth itſelf, at a very eaſy rate, when it has had a tendency

tendency to leſſen the eſteem of the people for their rulers. And after they have been thus *throwing about firebrands, arrows, and death*, and time has removed every ſhadow of credibility from reports, which affronted the common ſenſe of mankind, when they were at firſt raiſed, they have thought it a ſufficient excuſe, to ſay *they were in ſport*.

THAT the enemies of our conſtitution and our religion do theſe things, without any uneaſineſs of conſcience, we can eaſily account for; when we conſider, that falſhood, fraud, and cruelty, are not only indulged by the church of *Rome*, but are eſteemed meritorious, when they are employ'd to promote its intereſts. And when we reflect on the reſtleſs nature, and influence of ambition, and revenge, we ought not to wonder, that we every day ſee a great variety of fine talents baſely ſacrificed, to abuſe the credulity of mankind, in order to gratify theſe paſſions. But, methinks, it is very amazing, that ſo many, of whom charity obliges us to think they have a real love for their country, and who, upon other occaſions, diſcover a true ſenſe of religion, ſhould, after they have been often impos'd upon, and after they have ſo ſeverely felt the effects of it, be ſo eaſily drawn into the ſame ſnare, as to receive every freſh public ſcandal into their belief, and, without any reaſonable evidence, think they are at liberty to ſpread it.

NOT to lead you any farther back, for a full teſtimony of the wicked conduct of the leaders

of

of this ſeditious ſpirit, and the extreme *folly* of thoſe who have liſten'd to them; I need only put you in mind of the arts that were uſed to *murmur* us into a war, if I may ſo expreſs it; and, as ſoon as it became neceſſary, how every topic was improv'd, in order to terrify us with the expence, as well as to reproach every branch of the management of it. And then, you will remember, that no ſooner was a pacification on the carpet, but the ſame *patriots* did all they could to perſuade the people to repine and murmur even at the attempt, and propheſied every thing that was bad about the ſucceſs of it. And now it is compleated, and that in the moſt prudent, honourable and expeditious manner, I need not tell you what treatment it has met with, and what abuſe has been caſt on every great character that has been employ'd in bringing it to a happy concluſion.

But, when theſe men are brought to a point, what can malice itſelf ſay againſt this great tranſaction? It muſt be allow'd, that we did not fight for an enlargement of territory; and, therefore, that it is no great unhappineſs, if we have not attained it. It muſt be owned, that we have not loſt, or given up any poſſeſſion, which we enjoy'd before the war began; that the intereſts of our allies have been faithfully attended to, and that the ballance of power is preſerv'd. And what room then is left for calumny? what foundation for complaint? Why, to put an immediate ſtop to a vaſt effuſion of human blood, and prevent an expence, which

which our public circumſtances would not eaſily bear, it is acknowledged that our adminiſtration did conſent, to ſet one acquiſition of ours in *America*, againſt all the conqueſts our enemies had made in the *Low Countries*; and, as they were to be immediately delivered up, we have given hoſtages for fulfilling our part of the engagement; which, as it is agreeable with the uſage of contracting powers in the like caſes, ſo, it carries in it this honourable evidence in our favour, that in the midſt of all the diſadvantages of the war, our enemies had no equivalent *Britiſh* territory in their hands, to render this meaſure unneceſſary.

BUT how tender are theſe good *patriots* of the honour of their country! They would rather you ſhould waſte the lives of a hundred thouſand men, and involve yourſelves in a debt that may prove your ruin at laſt, than ſubmit to the diſgrace of giving ſuch a common ſecurity as this, to a foreign prince. While, at the ſame time, they think it conſiſtent with all this tenderneſs of honour, to expoſe every great character in government, not excuſing the greateſt, and every public meaſure that is taken, in which they have no hand, to the contempt, as far as lies in their power, of all foreign nations. What tenderneſs of honour is here! Surely natural compaſſion will teach us to bluſh for theſe men, if they do not bluſh for themſelves.

WHATEVER others do, may the ſacred ties of that holy religion, by which we profeſs to be

be ſtrictly bound, engage us, if we cannot prevail on artful and deſigning men to lay aſide theſe injurious meaſures, however, to watch againſt the weakneſs of being any more impoſed upon by them; or of giving any countenance to a *folly*, which if it goes on to encreaſe among us, as it has done for ſome years paſt, muſt, I fear, end in the ruin of our country.

To conclude, may the great bleſſing we are met to celebrate be thankfully received; and let us religiouſly acknowledge the divine hand that brought it about, and be careful to improve all the advantages of it, to the glory of God, and the common good. As that moſt excellent Prince, whom Providence has ſet over us, has given us ſuch an admirable example of moderation and humanity on this occaſion, and laid his juſt reſentments by, for the advantage of his people; may this inſtance of paternal goodneſs increaſe the attachment of our affection to his royal perſon, and family; may we do juſtice to the wiſe, the equitable, and gentle adminiſtration, under which we enjoy our liberties in the fulleſt extent; and, while we talk much of the benevolence which chriſtianity requires, may we labour to recommend it by our own conduct; laying aſide, according to its directions, *all hypocriſy and guile, all malice and envy, and* every ſeditious *whiſper* [a], and endeavouring as much as in us lies to ſuppreſs that party ſpirit, which has ſo often brought our

[a] 1 Pet. ii. 1. 2 Cor. xii. 20.

nation to the brink of ruin. And, in one word, may we uſe our ſeveral talents, our intereſts, and our zeal againſt thoſe heinous ſins which provoke God to forſake us, and give us up into the hands of our enemies; may we continually cultivate, and improve that moſt important peace with heaven, which we have obtained, through the mediation and blood of our great advocate, the *Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, and behave in our public and private ſtations, as thoſe who hope to enjoy the everlaſting bleſſings of it, in the world to come.

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